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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WINDHOEK 000106

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DEPT FOR AF/S, NEA, INR, INR/B

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [WA](#)

SUBJECT: (C) IMAM SHAFI SHUNS MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND IRANIAN MOSQUE

Classified by Ambassador Dennise Mathieu, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

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11. (C) Namibia's most senior Imam and head of the Windhoek Islamic Center, Kenyan-born Sheikh Shafi Aziz, told PolOff recently that representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood visited his offices in 2006 and 2007 seeking Shafi's support to obtain work permits and open a mosque in Namibia. Shafi politely showed them the door and suggested they not return. Shafi also criticized the head of the Iranian-funded Quba Mosque for trying to politicize religion. Separately, he shared insights into the funding of his mosque, the Windhoek Islamic Center. End summary.

Muslim Brotherhood Came Calling

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12. (C) Imam of the Windhoek Islamic Center, Sheikh Shafi Aziz, told PolOff recently that a couple of representatives from the Muslim Brotherhood visited Shafi's office in 2006 and again in 2007 (exact dates not given) to seek Shafi's support in obtaining work permits. The Brotherhood representatives were interested in opening a mosque in Namibia and bringing an imam from Egypt. With a tone of disdain, Shafi recounted how he refused to write support letters for the duo, politely telling them that "we can't vouch for people we don't know." Shafi said he was concerned that the Brotherhood would undertake recruiting or unwanted proselytizing for causes that had little to do with what Shafi views as the core of religion - spirituality. He said he had not seen any Muslim Brotherhood representatives since.

Quba Mosque: Mixing Politics and Religion?

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13. (C) In previous meetings, Shafi has avoided criticizing the other Muslim institutions in Namibia. However, when discussing his concerns about mixing politics and religion, Shafi fingered the Iranian-funded Quba Mosque (also in Windhoek) as a culprit. He said the Quba Mosque's previous and current administrators, neither of whom had extensive religious training, were more interested in political propaganda than religion. In Shafi's view, Namibia's Muslim community, largely comprised of converts, is too unfamiliar with Islam and its strictures to start confusing the religious teachings with political discussions about Iraq the U.S. or the Middle East. He pointedly stated that he and his colleagues did not associate with the Quba Mosque. Its political interests made it "an extension of the Iranian Embassy (in Pretoria)." Shafi acknowledged that part of this divergence with the Quba Mosque was the Sunni-Shi'a divide. Shafi did not share any similar concerns about the 13 mosques in the country, most of which the Windhoek Islamic Center shares some affiliation.

Funding for the Windhoek Islamic Center

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14. (C) Possibly as a counterpoint to the aforementioned discussion, Shafi explained the source of funding for his mosque, the Windhoek Islamic Center (WIC). Local businessman, former Ugandan Aziz Kebabi (phonetic) was the prime donor for the purchase of the Center, said Shafi. He explained that Kebabi contributed and pooled support from other Muslims in South Africa and locally. Mosque-goers provide the funding for daily costs, which amount to US\$500 for utilities and between US\$1,000-1,200 in salaries per month. Although the Saudi Government did not provide start-up costs for the WIC, it recently began providing Ugandan-born Sheikh Ali, the other imam at the WIC, a stipend of approximately \$500 per month. It was less clear exactly where Shafi's salary came from, although it could be a variety of sources in addition to local contributions. For instance, Shafi went on a Saudi Government funded tour to Saudi Arabia in 2007, where he met the King and other leaders. He also travels annually to Kenya, sometimes stopping to preach in Zambia on the way.

Comment

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15. (C) Shafi is an open-minded moderate who uses every opportunity to speak against intolerance, terrorism, and the misuse of religion for political ends. His explicit criticism of political pandering by the Iranian-run Quba Mosque and his rejection of Muslim Brotherhood overtures are positive signs that the most active leaders of Namibia's small Muslim community are doing their best to keep their flock on the right path. Given the small size of Namibia's Muslim community, Shafi would know if extremist elements had taken root. We will continue to develop our relationship with Shafi and encourage him to share any future concerns he may have about undesirable activities in Namibia. End comment.

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Bio note

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16. (C) Imam Shafi was born on August 16, 1974 in Homa Bay Kenya. He obtained his high school diploma at the Al-Fatah Islamic Institute in Wajir, Kenya in 1998, followed by a BA in Islamic Studies at the Islamic Foundation Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiyyah College of Islamic Studies in Mombasa, Kenya in 2006 (partly via correspondence). He simultaneously obtained Single Subject Diplomas in Marketing, International Business, and Public Relations through the Institute of Commercial Management in the UK (distance learning) in 2005. He came to Namibia in 2001 and worked for three years as the Imam of the Majsid Nur (Nur Mosque) in Oshakati, Namibia. He then came to Windhoek to lead the Windhoek Islamic Center. He has two boys and is expecting a third in April 2008. He had a daughter who died after birth. His deceased father was an imam in Kenya. Shafi very factually and without criticism told PolOff that he believes his father cooperated with Kenyan intelligence services, informing them about concerns he had about members of the Muslim community there. Shafi fluently speaks English, Luo, Swahili, and Arabic.

MATHIEU